

# Safeguard your life's digital work with Carbonite



John Deans

Are you a gambling guy or a betting gal? After a couple trips to Vegas and a few hundred dollars lost quickly, I know I'm not.

Sitting around playing poker with the guys can be fun, but I still look at the cash I bring to the table as spending money that is purchasing some entertainment time.

What we cannot wager on is our data, but I still see numerous friends, family members, and clients do it every day. No matter how much I write about backups, preach on saving your data, and tell horror stories about people losing their files to equipment failure, theft or even fire, they still roll the dice by not making copies of their stuff.

The statistics show that al-

most half of all computer users will accidentally delete one or more files this year. For every one hundred hard drives spinning and storing data, thirteen will crash and the data will cease to exist in 2009. About 97 percent of the thousands of laptops that are stolen are never recovered which includes the data on them.

People think, "Well, my files are safe since my computer is working fine." What I say to that is, "Your house didn't burn down last month, so why don't you cancel your homeowner's insurance this month?" Like your home, the data on your computer can be very valuable and it is hard to appreciate that until everything is gone.

We've talked in the past about backing our files up to external hard drives and we have discussed utilizing online backups. Today, I want to closely examine and make you aware of a very good automated online backup service called "Carbonite" that can easily eliminate risk to your computer files and put the house odds totally in your favor.

Over the years I have used Internet-based backup services like DataDepositBox.com and Mozy.com and in certain sites I still do. But, over the past year I have been rolling out the Carbonite.com backup application to primarily home users since it is so affordable and easy to use.

Carbonite takes the files you tell it to backup, compresses and encrypts them for security and transmits that data over your Internet connection to their server farms. If anything bad ever happens you can download the just the single file that you accidentally deleted or bring down everything that was previously backed up if your hard drive crashes.

Let's go through the process so you will have a good idea how this all works. First, go to the Web site [www.Carbonite.com](http://www.Carbonite.com) and click on the blue Buy tab at the right of the screen.

From there you select the one-year plan for \$54.95 (which is only \$4.58 a month or just 15 cents a day) which gives you unlimited backups for the one computer. That means you can backup tens of thousands of files with dozens or even hundreds of gigabytes worth of data for that same low price of only \$54.95 a year.

After filling out the rest of the online sign-up form and config-

uring some qualifying question and answer settings, you will then click the install program option and take the defaults after it downloads and installs. The default settings of Carbonite are smart enough to automatically backup your user files, bookmarks, address book, music, pictures, movies and even most financial data files like Quicken and Quickbooks.

After the installation is completed it will immediately begin backing up your data by uploading the files to their secure site. You can see this happening by right clicking on the Carbonite icon in the system tray on the lower right of the screen and choosing "Status." The "Info Center" will pop up with the progress bar and file statistics showing how much it has backed up and how far it is to go to complete.

When I first installed Carbonite after cancelling my Mozy service, it took about two weeks to upload the 53,000 files comprising 25 gigabytes worth of data. After the first full backup, Carbonite then just quietly monitors the checksum of those files to watch for any updates or additional files then just uploads those that have been changed or added.

If there are any other files or folders outside of Carbonite's default backup list you can easily add them. Do this by starting up the Windows Explorer, go to the hard drive and folder of interest, right-click the file or folder, and look for the new Carbonite option on the popup window. From there you can tell it to "Back this up" and it will from that point on.

One neat feature Carbonite

has is the little green dot it puts on every folder and file icon that is visible when you view your file list with the Windows Explorer. That green dot means that Carbonite has successfully backed up the file and transmitted it to their system.

When I first create a new file or modify an old one that little green dot turns yellow signifying that Carbonite is aware of the change and is currently backing it up. After the online backup of that file or directory is completed, the yellow dot turns green.

It is a real good feeling just to see all those little green dots on all my folders and files knowing that if my computer was stolen, burned up or crashed, all my hard work can be simply downloaded to another computer.

Carbonite's restore process is just as easy and it can be done in a couple of ways. First, if you just mess up a file or accidentally delete it, you can again use the Windows Explorer and click on the "Carbonite Backup Drive." There you will see all the files backed up on their server, and

you can right-click them to restore any or all files back to your local hard drive.

If the worst case happens like your hard drive crashed or laptop got stolen, you can login to [www.Carbonite.com](http://www.Carbonite.com) with your e-mail address and password, click on the Remote Access button and start downloading files that way. For a complete reload on a new computer you would download the Carbonite application and start a full reload of the new computer from your last full backup at Carbonite.com.

It may take awhile depending on the amount of data and speed of your Internet connection, but it will all be back good as new.

Bottom line: Rather than gambling with your life's digital work, make a sure bet on safeguarding it with Carbonite.com for 15 cents a day.

Next week's column: Smart boards.

*John Deans of Deans Consulting.com is a Brenham area computer networking consultant who can be reached at 289-2233 or [John@DeansConsulting.com](mailto:John@DeansConsulting.com) for questions and comments.*